

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 EB-11 COME-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

RSC-01 FAA-00 CAB-09 PA-03 PRS-01 USIA-12 SS-15 NSC-10

RSR-01 /094 W

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R 121500Z JUL 73

FM AMCONSUL BELIZE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3033

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

U S POSTAL SERVICE WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETEL PFOR BH GT

SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL MAIL TO BELIZE

REFERENCE: BELIZE 581, NOVEMBER 1, 1972

1. THE SECRETARY OF THE BELIZE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CALLED ON JULY 11, TO CONVEY COMPLAINTS OF THE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY CONCERNING DELAYS IN MAIL TO BELIZE. SIMILAR COMPLAINTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED FROM BUSINESSMEN BY CONSULAR OFFICERS, AND THE OPPOSITION PRESS HAS CARRIED UNFAVORABLE COMMENTS ON MAIL SERVICE. WE HAVE HAD OUR OWN PROBLEMS, AS SOME AIR POUCHES FROM WASHINGTON HAVE TAKEN AS MUCH AS NINE TO TWENTY-ONE DAYS TO REACH BELIZE.

2. AT THE PRESENT TIME, ACCORDING TO VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, MAIL FROM THE U.K., CANADA AND THE U.S. IS TAKING NINE TO FIFTEEN DAYS, WHEREAS SEVERAL MONTHS AGO THE RANGE WAS ALLEGEDLY LESS THAN HALF THAT. AIR MAIL FROM THE UNITED STATES USED TO ARRIVE WITHIN FOUR DAYS, AND IN TWO DAYS ON SOME OCCASIONS.

3. THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SECRETARY INDICATED THAT THE

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PROBLEM SEEMED TO BE GROWING WORSE. IT IS AFFECTING

BUSINESS, AS IMPORTERS OFTEN DO NOT HAVE SHIPPING DOCUMENTS WHEN SHIPMENTS ARRIVE IN PORT, CAUSING DELAYS IN CLEARANCE AND ADDITIONAL CONFUSION IN CUSTOMS. THE CONSULATE GENERAL HAS ALSO HAD DIFFICULTIES WITH SHIPPING LINES AND CUSTOMS BECAUSE OF DELAYS IN RECEIVING SHIPPING DOCUMENTS BY AIRMAIL FROM THE U.S. DELAYS ARE ALSO AFFECTING INDIVIDUALS DEPENDENT UPON REMITTANCES OF VARIOUS KINDS FROM THE U.S.

4. WE CANNOT, FROM THIS POINT, ASCERTAIN WHAT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DELAYS. THE BELIZEAN POST OFFICE SYSTEM IS CERTAINLY SLOW IN MOVING MAIL AROUND THE COUNTRY, E.G. FOUR DAYS TO A WEEK BETWEEN BELIZE AND BELMOPAN. THE DELAYS ARE GENERALLY BLAMED ON THE FACT THAT PANAM TAKES THE MAIL TO GUATEMALA BEFORE IT IS TRANSHIPPED TO BELIZE. THE "MAN ON THE STREET," PERHAPS EGGED ON BY THE OPPOSITION PRESS, BELIEVES THAT THE GOG, BECAUSE OF ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD BELIZE, IS IN SOME WAY RESPONSIBLE, ALTHOUGH WE UNDERSTAND THE MAIL DOES NOT ENTER THE GOG POSTAL SYSTEM OR CUSTOMS. NO MATTER WHERE THE DIFFICULTY IS, THE FACT IS THAT THE MAIL DELAYS HAVE BECOME AN ADDITIONAL MINOR IRRITANT WITH REGARD TO GUATEMALA.

5. ON THE SUBJECT OF MAIL, THE LOCAL PRESS HAS ALSO COMMENTED ON THE FACT THAT THE CHANGE IN THE NAME OF THE COUNTRY FROM BRITISH HONDURAS TO BELIZE IS NOT ALWAYS RECOGNIZED. LETTERS FROM THE U.S. HAVE BEEN RETURNED TO SENDERS BY U.S. POST OFFICES WITH THE NOTATION, "RETURNED FOR BETTER ADDRESS." IN ONE CASE, THE STAMPED NOTATION HAD "WHAT COUNTRY" HANDWRITTEN UNDER IT. MOST PRESUMABLY REALIZE THAT THE NEWNESS OF THE CHANGE IS RESPONSIBLE, AND BELIZE ITSELF WILL TAKE A LONG TIME IN REMOVING ITS FORMER NAME FROM ALL OFFICIAL SIGNS, SEALS AND DOCUMENTS, BUT THIS HAS CAUSED ADDITIONAL MAIL DELAYS FOR SOME.

6. WE TOLD THE CHAMBER SECRETARY THAT WE WERE AWARE OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT MAIL, BUT THAT NO ENTITY HAD REALLY DOCUMENTED THE DELAYS. WE SUGGESTED THAT PERHAPS CHAMBER COULD CONDUCT SURVEY ON RECENT MAIL EXPERIENCE, OR GET THE POST OFFICE TO DO SO. THE POST OFFICE HAS NOT PRODUCED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DISPATCH RECORDS TO SUPPORT ITS EARLIER COMPLAINTS.

7. WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY ASSISTANCE FROM THE ADDRESSEES IN ASCERTAINING TRUTH OF SITUATION, AND IN SEEING WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ALLEVIATE IT. WE DO NOT WISH TO SEE ADDITIONAL IRRITANTS ADDED TO GOB-GOG RELATIONS WHEN THE GOG PROBABLY HAS NO BLAME IN THE MATTER-- WHICH MOST BELIZEANS WOULD NEVER BELIEVE. WOLLAM

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